

International Relations 101: Midterm Review

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ID Example: War's Inefficiency Puzzle

War's inefficiency puzzle is a research question asking why states choose costly conflict when there exist a range of settlements mutually preferable to war. Fearon first posed the puzzle in his article "Rationalist Explanations for War." Prior explanations—such as anarchy or expected gains outweigh expected costs—fail to answer the puzzle. Instead, Fearon proposed that commitment problems and private information (with incentives to misrepresent) nevertheless lead to conflict.

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Stuff People Messed Up Last Year

Advice on Quotes

- Do *not* rewrite the quote.
 - Tell me something I don't know instead.
- Bad: “Fearon argues that wars occur due to incomplete information, commitment problems, and issue indivisibility.”
- Good: “Commitment problems cause wars because _____. Issue indivisibility causes wars because _____.”

Quote #1: War's Inefficiency Puzzle

- Correct: A research question that asks why states choose to fight wars when there are settlements which are mutually preferable to war.
- Incorrect: There exist mutually preferable settlements to war, so war should never happen.



Giacomo
Chiozza



Essay #1: Issue Indivisibility

- Nuclear weapons are a means to an end.
 - The states negotiate over them because they know more power will lead to a different distribution of the good (territory, policy, whatever).
- Thus, nuclear weapons are *not* an indivisible issue.
 - Having nukes is indivisible, but they are not issues.

How Not to Write a Bad Essay

1. ATQ/ATFQ
2. Make your first paragraph one sentence, and make that sentence your thesis.
3. Be direct. Don't hide your answer. Don't make it hard for us to find your answer.
4. Use paragraphs.
5. Cite the readings.

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Fun Facts about Theses

- A thesis ATQ/ATFQ.
 - Tell me something I couldn't find out from reading the question.
- Examples of anti-theses:
 - War between Israel and Iran this year is very likely. This essay will explain why.
 - War has been an ongoing problem for humanity. We should all be interested in studying war. It is an important topic because people die.

A Template

- Here's an example of a good thesis:
 - Three rationalist explanations for war between Israel and Iran are _____, _____, and _____ due to _____.

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Be Direct

- Don't write sentences that don't ATQ/ATFQ.
- Bad ways to start an essay:
 - War has been an ongoing problem for humanity.
 - We should all be interested in studying war.
 - War is interesting because people die.
 - For centuries, mankind has pondered a vital question: War—what is it good for? Some say absolutely nothing, but I will challenge that assertion in this essay.

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The purpose of this slide is to explain why you should use paragraphs. Note that there are no run on sentences in this paragraph. I am only using short sentences. Each sentence has a straightforward meaning. Yet you will probably have a hard time finishing this paragraph. Are you still with me? Good. I hope you are having a wonderful day. I am so far. I enjoy teaching. I also enjoy corrupting the youth with my teaching. I guess I should not have typed that last sentence. Oh well.

Anyway...where was I? Oh yes—the usefulness of paragraphs. While they are necessary organize your thoughts, they also have a more practical purpose. If you stopped reading this paragraph after the third sentence, you probably stopped reading this slide in general. That is normal. When a reader gets bored of a paragraph (or is skimming your paper), he skips to the next one. If the next paragraph is two pages away, your reader will miss a lot of information. Fortunately, I am A Good Teaching Assistant™, so I would not get bored or skim your material. But I heard you have an evil TA for psychology. So, to practice appeasing him, you might as well adopt this strategy in Introduction to International Relations as well.

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A Subtle Suggestion



PHASE 1

PHASE 2

PHASE 3

Read "Rationalist
Explanations for War"



Profit

